

One Common Trench or Two Opposite Ones?

Saddam Hussein

Editor's Note

The Arab Socialist Baath Party regards all Arabs as being part of one nation both in the cultural and spiritual sense. The different countries, in which they live, make up a politically and economically united fatherland. In the Party's documents, 'the Arab fatherland' means all the Arab countries. Each of these is a 'qotr', which, literally translated, means country; in the Baath context, it should be read as province or region. The adjective 'Qotri' (provincial, regional) is used when referring to an individual country. The adjective 'qawmi' (national), on the other hand, is used when referring to all the countries, which together make up the one fatherland. Thus, the National Leadership deals only with matters concerning the whole fatherland. Each Regional Leadership deals with matters within its own country.

As for example, the Lebanese or Jordanian Regional Leadership etc.

The word Baath can be translated as meaning revival, resurgence or renewal. Hitherto, resurgence seems to be the meaning, which is preferred by Arab intellectuals and foreign Arab experts.

Foreword

The question of the National Front has been a pivotal one in the Iraqi revolutionary experiment since July 17-30, 1968. The Arab Baath Socialist Party, which leads this experiment, views the Front as a strategically program with long-term aims, not only for the revolutionary experiment in the country itself, but also for the Arab revolutionary movement.

This profound principle needs constant emphasis and explanation, especially in the light of various problems in the process of revolutionary transformation, which the Front has faced in the course of the experiment's practical implementation.

One of the outstanding characteristics of the revolutionary experiment in Iraq is that the problems arising during the experiment are neither neglected nor covered up, but discussed openly in a democratic and objective spirit.

This distinctive approach stands out clearly in the following address by Comrade Saddam Hussein.

Delivered at an enlarged meeting of the Committees of the Progressive Patriotic and Nationalist Front, the address deals very frankly with problems, which arise, in practice. The solutions suggested by Comrade Saddam Hussein stem from faith in the necessity of the Front and its continuation for the accomplishment of the program of the revolution in all fields, including the program of socialist transformation.

This meeting took place on August 21, 1976, in Baghdad. It was chaired by Comrade Saddam Hussein and attended by members of the PPNF Higher committee, Secretariat and committees from the governorates.

This address constitutes an important account of the achievements and problems of the revolutionary experiment conducted in Iraq by the Arab Baath Socialist Party. Due to the advanced and authentically revolutionary methods of action adopted by the leaders of this endeavor, the experiment has become a genuine center of diffusion for the Arab Revolution as a whole.

The subjective defect

Let us begin with the subjective defect. Regardless of what we say concerning the external forces conspiring directly against our revolution and, more generally, against the Arab people and the peoples of the area, our main protection remain subjective immunity.

No matter how careful we are in assessing the dangers, unless we are subjectively immune we can contribute nothing serious and decisive to the full safety of the revolution, nor can we place the PPNF in its appropriate place where it is free from all external and internal dangers.

Several comrades spoke at this meeting. Most of them, however, were from the Baath Party and Communist Party, in addition to a few representing the other patriotic forces and elements. In spite of its wholesome and democratic aspects, this phenomenon accounts for parts of the conflict going on between the two parties outside the framework of the Front and which has also come to express itself as an intra-Front conflict. Thus, we have seen the Baathists criticizing the Communists directly or indirectly for their acts. The Communists, on their part, have done the same. This criticism, however, has not been accompanied by self-criticism, which, in my opinion, is the key factor. When we find a solution to this aberration, which becomes more serious with the growing dangers surrounding us and the social advance of the Revolution toward its aims, we shall have placed ourselves in the correct position.

Independence and inter-action

I think that the error found among Baathists, and particularly among Communists (we should state this boldly and frankly, especially since the Communists' error in this case outweighs that of the Baathists; I do not say this because I am a Baathist but because I am firmly convinced of it.) occurs when an individual comrade, from his own ideological perspective, believes that he alone can bring about the full and absolute truth in practice. He then insists on this conviction, asking others to follow him. All his subsequent actions, then, will be affected by this position. Such an incorrect notion of independence, if it continues, does nothing to aid the Front in reaching its strategic horizon.

I say this with full responsibility and concern for all patriotic tendencies. The basis for interaction, comrades, is the presence of a spirit and a desire for interaction. Desire alone, however, without a firm base, is insufficient. Hence we should create the psychological atmosphere, which makes interaction a necessary and essential process. In any case, interaction is not incompatible with ideological independence.

A member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) would not have joined his party without first being convinced in the truth of its endeavor. The same can be said about Baathists and Communists. But now we are called upon to proceed on the basis of facts which lead us to interaction and which place new facts before us. Predominant among these is the recognition of the Revolution as our major truth, which does not preclude our principle independence but functions rather as a roof under which we conduct our debates in a non-antagonistic way. Also, our relationships to the Revolution, as well as to each other, should be characterised by an interaction of ideas. Secondly, ideological independence does not preclude interaction whose purpose is to place ideology in a new context whose new aspects will be the adaptation to and interaction with the facts and developing objective conditions of the society which will open new paths for political, ideological and social action. Such an orientation will enable us to form a Front with plenty of common ground, always improving the interactions of our convictions.

Every one of us should be both a teacher and a student in his relationship with the people and the contingents of the patriotic and progressive forces. This would create a process of give and take, of interaction for the purpose of arriving at a truth. Also, this would create

an image of serious work and sincere relations for the purpose of achieving, together, some common aims.

This form of interaction, which we want in our relationship within the Front, will safeguard and develop our common purpose.

We all agree that theory is formulated and developed in the light of reality. Why, then, should some of you only wish to be teachers, without agreeing to interact with the others? We should each simultaneously practice the roles of student and teacher.

Without this key quality, interaction cannot exist, nor can there be an end to the occasional tension on the part of the Baathists, nor can there be an end to the tension and incorrect actions on the part of the Communists (which also feed the attitude of the Baathists and provide them with psychological justifications). This is also true of the other patriotic contingents.

For example, even in the ABSP, when we criticize the party organization in Lebanon and the struggle for power in that Arab province, some Baathists are sensitive to criticism on the part of those who have not participated seriously in the construction process or shown definite concern for the Revolution and its future. We have already experienced such cases.

Rights and duties, then, should be balanced. Any comrade who wishes to have the right to criticize should give proof of his concern in the criticism process through a distinguished performance of his every-day work. Otherwise, he would not deserve such a privilege and would face opposition from other comrades.

Side by side with an ideological independence interacting with new facts, there should be a clear affinity to the revolution. This affinity to the Revolution, however, should not preclude ideological independence, but, so long as the affinity of some among you to the Revolution is not clearly established, Baathists are bound to harbor some reservation toward them.

Communist comrades, there have been many experiments in the world where Communist parties have acted with great flexibility in response to the national situations in their respective countries. In Cuba, for example, the Communist Party cooperated with Castro's revolution to the point where Castro became the leader of the Communist Party there. There are Communist Parties in Eastern Europe, which do not even bear the name of the Communist Party. Why should ideological independence in this country be interpreted in a manner, which obstructs cooperation between yourselves and your comrades in other political tendencies, when it is interpreted differently in other revolutionary experiments throughout the world?

We sometimes hear a lot of talk from Baathist and other political groups in the Front. Some Baathist comrades consider they are lost in the Front and some discuss this subject in their Party locals. They ask their leaders to answer the following questions:

Why do we need the Front at a time when the main positive aspects of the Communist Party are simply its support for our revolutionary measures? measures on which the entire population agree with us, such as nationalization of the oil industry, the giant strides along the path toward socialism, the defense of Iraq's future against the suspicious reactionary offensive spearheaded by the renegade faction in the north... etc? Could the Communist Party take any stand other than this if it were outside the front? Is the fact that the Communist Party supports us in such cases sufficient proof of its cooperation with the Revolution, whereas it turns against us whenever it finds us to be in error? (When we say that the Communist Party turns against us, we do not mean that it preaches slogans to overturn our regime, since we know there is no justification for such slogans. We mean, rather, that in its educational position and every-day activities, it turns against us. By this method it tries to make gains at the expense of the other patriotic groups, most frequently the Arab Baath Socialist Party.) The same holds for our Communist comrades, who also discuss these questions in their meetings, asking: Why do we need the Front if we do not really share power? It also holds, albeit to a lesser extent, for our comrades in the other patriotic political groups. We, then, ask the following question: Are not the joint efforts to build a new society with greater zeal, which reinforce Baathist efforts with those of the KDP, the independents, the Communist Party, the KDP and the Progressive Kurds already enough of an advantage for the ABSP? The answer is yes.

An objective and all-embracing outlook, an outlook of interaction and serious joint efforts to build a new society devoid of syndicalist concepts of gain, such an outlook would be to the advantage of the ABSP and all other parties.

We also ask the following question: What has the ABSP lost by forming a front? Should the individuals gained by the Communist Party be regarded as a loss to the Baath Party according to the previously mentioned Front outlook?

With such a concept guiding the Front and its everyday activity, however, everyone wins and no one loses. The same question is addressed to the Communist Party: Comrades, you are thinking of your own interests, but what have you lost? You have grown in number and popularity. Your organization has grown stronger. Today, you are free to exchange ideas with other patriotic groups and you are acting freely. What would you have gained if you had remained outside the Front?

According to our information, some brothers, especially from the Communist Party, still feel embarrassed when asked: Are you with the regime or not? Are you with the Revolution or not? Is it embarrassing for one to side with the great Revolution and its regime? The Revolution is cherished by every honest patriot and its major achievements are obvious to all. If there is to be any speculation about whether one is for or against the Revolution, it should be made in the context of goals, not that of details which should be criticized in a democratic and objective manner.

We should all criticize flawed details, but errors in details should not bring us into a psychological opposition to the Revolution and its regime. At the same time, however, the errors of the administrative apparatus should be neither a means nor a justification for

pursuing Party interests. The basic justification for these should be our ideology as we expound it in cooperation with the masses.

The Communists believe in a line ideologically different from that of the Baath Party. The same is true of the KDP and the others. They believe in pursuing their interests independently, since any other way would be bound to lead to contradictions among the various patriotic forces. It might even lead to deviation if it came into contact with the revolutionary process. Suppose we Baathists reversed the case and started attacking the Communists in our speeches and through our media, saying that they were attacking our regime and principles. They would regard these as improper uses of the administrative apparatus and would try to put these tactics to their own advantage. What do you imagine would happen? Is such a state of affairs acceptable? If it is, you can imagine how much you would lose if the leaders of the Baath Party were to inform the masses of the negative aspects of the Communist Party. We say this not out of vanity, but rather out of the conviction that our relationship with the masses is based on positive cooperation and mutual trust. That is why they would listen to our words. So when, instead of saying that, we speak positively of the Front, of your role in it, and of the role of the other patriotic forces, this is to your advantage.

Therefore, since there is no loss within the Front for any group, why are there such reservations? Why have the negative vestiges of the past survived until now? Even now we still notice these vestiges of the past, with their negative aspects, among the Communists and Baathists.

Both parties, however, did not regard these vestiges as deviations deserving strict and stern criticism.

The comrade to whom you have referred as refusing to deliver a speech on behalf of the Front should have been taken severely to task. Similarly, any Baathist who violates the central directives should be called to account for his actions.

(1) Comrade Saddam Hussein is referring to a problem dealt with at the meeting, namely, the refusal of a Communist comrade to deliver a speech on behalf of the Front at a public meeting.

One Common Trench or two Opposite Sides?

Practice of Criticism in Intra-Front Relations

By Saddam Hussein

In questions of criticism, if a Ba'athist observes you to be hunting for mistakes, overlooking the objective possibilities when evaluating the measures taken by the Revolution, or turning errors into ways of winning over workers or chances for dialogue for winning over peasants and intellectuals, the Ba'athist is likely to take a hostile attitude toward you. In addition, he may well find that the bonds between himself and the Communist Party are weak, if not non-existent.

Our goal should be a sound ideological and political program stemming from analyses, which contradict neither the National Action Charter nor the framework and central tenets of the Revolution. Furthermore, this criticism should be placed in the right context, not taking place in the street with the citizens but confined to the Front committees.

Such is the spirit of the Front, as we understand it. If we diminished opportunities for criticism in the Front committees, enlarged meetings and Front leadership, we would be compromising the development of the Front with its strategic horizon for building and continuing the tasks of national construction and struggle.

How can we understand cooperation and mutual influence if the meeting of the Front committees is being put off?

How can there be any real cooperation in the absence of frankness? Why do some Ba'athist not attend meetings for fear that the methods of presentation used by the National Front groups (or some of them) might embarrass them?

I can assure you that there can be no embarrassment if the logic of the above groups is incorrect or if their method of presentation is not objective.

Whereas the Ba'athist think that Front committee meetings facilitate at their expense the preparation of sectarian plans in the interests of other Front participants, other Front groups believe that the regularity of Front activities can only lead to Ba'athist making gains at the expense of others. When this new logic is replaced by one founded on a willingness to cooperate in the control of new realities, however, no group will view the logic of the opposite areas antagonistic. In other words, no groups will make gains at the expense of others.

The meetings of the Front committees should be regularized, with greater opportunities for interaction among their members and for criticism and self-criticism. If a Communist, for instance, encounters certain facts put forth by Ba'athist or other patriotic groups, which he does not wish to concede in the meeting for fear of being embarrassed by his Party organization, he should take these facts to his Party, saying: "These facts have been submitted to me and I support the viewpoint of the Ba'athist comrades and other groups. So, please, do not embarrass me, comrades; this action has been a wrong one". The Ba'athist should also do the same. Hence, not one of you would be embarrassed by this in a meeting.

There should be mutual influence in the Front. This would enable the Front to develop and function in the context of the strategic horizon planned for it.

This is the way we should act as leaders, because our responsibility is greater than that of other comrades who are leaders or members of Front committees in Anbar, Diyala and other governorates.

There are certain groups in divisions of the State apparatus, which, because of their nature, continue to make excessive demands in order to hold on to extraordinary powers. This, therefore, is not a normal situation.

Throughout the entire world, under both socialist and capitalist regimes, special groups try to present the political leadership with extraordinary situations. Some of these factions might do this unintentionally, in cases where they might be psychologically compelled to create an abnormal situation in order to gain extraordinary powers in relation to the political

Leadership.

Our role in education, control and cooperation, however, will reduce the chances for bad or naïve elements to create extraordinary situations in dealing with any question at issue.

If the AESP were to stop criticizing and purging the administrative apparatus, you would then be entitled to say: "The ABSP is responsible for the flaws in the apparatus." But where there is continual criticism in the press, a continual purge of the apparatus and

continued resolute measures, it is wrong to place the blame for the error of a district or sub district director on the AESP alone. Such an error would be the responsibility of us all. When facts concerning acts against the Front parties on the part of any administrative official are submitted, and no measures are taken against this official, then you can tell your comrades in the committees: "These are the facts. You should convey them to your supreme leadership if it is outside your responsibilities to deal with them." As for rumors, if you wish them to die, you cannot allow them to live even for one day. The fight against rumors should be conducted within ourselves because we, the Front parties, are responsible for spreading the rumors. When this phenomenon is eliminated there will be an end to rumors.

Before beginning to fight rumors, you must first stop spreading them yourselves, and you will see that in a short time, rumors will be considerably reduced. At that time you can work out a plan to eliminate the remaining rumors.

How can we put these words into practice?

There should be more interaction through regular meetings and an examination of the political decisions and administrative measures of the State together with their basic justification according to the folk proverb, "incense banishes wickedness." We say, instead, "clarity banishes wickedness in the same way that a candle banishes darkness."

When the facts concerning a given question are clearer to a Ba'athist comrade than they are to other comrades of the Front in Sinjar to take one example, and the Ba'athist fails to convey the information to the other comrades, they are bound to become rumormongers. How can they know what facts are not true? Why does the Ba'athist not explain the facts to them at the meetings of the Front committees in order to refute their pretexts of being ignorant of the true facts? Regular weekly meetings would create the opportunity to tell your comrades what is true and what is not. You could tell them: "You should not speak vaguely outside the meetings without first asking for an explanation of the subject." You, comrades, are supposed to refute rumors even though you imagine that some of them might be true. The right principle is to defend the march of the Revolution against the rumormongers and avoid spreading them. You can then criticize whatever you regard as erroneous in the committee meetings. But if such an effort is not made, criticism and the spreading of rumors will naturally continue outside the meetings.

If we had applied this principle seriously and extensively, the rumors and errors of the administrative apparatus, as well as the errors of the special organs, would have been reduced.

There are some groups, which, like wolves, examine their prey before attacking it. If they observe someone attacking the National Front Parties in the presence of a Ba'athist who does not defend them against the attackers and make it clear that their criticism is incompatible with Front relations—and conversely, if they find someone attacking the Ba'athist before Front Party members—it will only encourage these groups to attack any

Front Party before others. We find that such phenomena compel some administrative organs to sometimes act in opposition to parties of the PPNF.

1 Sinjar is a town in Nineveh Governorate

One Common Trench or Two Opposite Ones?

Part 3

By Saddam Hussein

Requirements for victory

Comrades:

Militants should be vigilant and cautious, without being vain. The comrades assembled here have already heard me in the past speak about confidence in the future at a time when the rebellion in the mountains was strong and the reactionary forces in the area were preparing their antagonistic schemes from stronger positions. Still, we were confident in victory. Perhaps some of you said to yourselves then that, "Comrade Saddam is too conceited." But this self-confidence was based on deep faith in the people as well as careful scientific revolutionary calculations. On the basis of these calculations we were able to tell people whether we would win or lose.

Some of the Communist comrades must have said to themselves:

"Those petit bourgeois are incapable of victory because the basic conditions for a revolutionary party, a party that aims at building a socialist community, are not fully present. How can they overcome the forces of counterrevolution? They must therefore be self-righteous."1

We could have excused such conceptions as a result of the negative relations, which existed in the first two years of the Revolution, but since that time there have been no objective justifications or explanations for such attitudes.

I am not asking for praise from anyone. I assure you, comrades, that when topics are presented for discussion between two separate trenches, we have full confidence that we are the ones to praise others. However, we are presenting this formula now from one interacting trench in which we, together, praise others outside the PPNF.

The victory, which we have achieved, was not a victory for Baathists alone, but for all of us, as a people and as a Front. It is in this spirit that we have triumphed.

It is in this same manner, and not with a self-righteous attitude, that we should approach the minor incidents, which sometimes occur in the Autonomous Area. In other words, we must understand the development of the historical movement and of the people's will, the will, which we are resolutely leading, with full intention of achieving our aim of building a new society. We stress again that these trivial incidents will not frighten us nor can they do anything to stop the march of the Revolution.

We must, above all, look for defects within ourselves. If we were to lose our people in Kurdistan, we would suffer a real loss. But ten, a hundred or any number of people in the high mountains standing against the Revolution is of no importance. There have been large numbers of deceived people in the high mountains before, together with traitors and conspirators, but they were unable to stop the march of the Revolution. If we were, however, to lose our people in the Kurdistan Autonomous Area, even if there were not a single armed opponent in the mountains or along the borders, we would be defeated. When we win our people over, we shall be victorious. The future will be open and clear before us, whether the insurgents number ten, a hundred or a thousand. Our victory is certain; in fact, we are already victorious.

We have stated earlier that, prior to March 11, 1970, if the Kurdish question had been dealt with through a purely military approach, we would have been the losers, even if the last trench of the enemy forces in the mountains had been defeated. But if the question were approached in a correctly principled and political manner, we would win the battle even if our enemies were numerous. This prediction has been justified in the defeat of a renegade faction, which involved more than a purely military solution. The Iraqi army, despite its valiant role, would not have been able to perform effectively if it had not been defending the political principles and aims drawn up by the political leadership.

Principles were responsible for the defeat of Mullah Barazani and his renegade faction. The basis of these principles is a common approach to the problems of all our people, whether in Kurdistan or in Basrah, as well as to our own problems.

When this approach is ignored, the hundred opponents will become a thousand, the thousand will become five thousand and there, then, ten thousand. In fact, even if there were no armed rebellion at all, you, yourselves, would be defeated.

We are not saying this for propaganda purpose, but because we really believe in it. We made the same statement after the agreement of March 6, 1975 immediately following the defeat of the renegade faction in the mountains. We stated then: "Do not be self-righteous, for then you will get carried away and lose your capacity for perceiving the right direction and objectives. Do not ignore the factors which contributed to your victory, but rather develop them further in order to be always victorious..."

The essence of these factors is concern for your people. We like the mountain in the northern part of the country not merely because it is part of Iraq, but primarily because our people live there. We defend the mountain in order to defend our people and this is the way we must approach the issue. Those who defend the mountain but oppress their people cannot be victorious. While defending the mountain, it should be made clear that you are essentially defending the people who live there.

1 - Comrade Saddam Hussein is referring to the erroneous analyses committed by some Communists when they classify the ABSP as a petit bourgeois party, neglecting its real characteristics as a revolutionary vanguard party representing all revolutionary social strata.

2 - The March 6, 1975 Agreement was signed between Iraq and Iran to solve the border problems between the two countries. The agreement was concluded in Algiers during the open summit conference. It was signed by Comrade Saddam Hussein, on behalf of Iraq, and by the Shah of Iran on behalf of his country. President Houari Boumedienne participated in the meetings concerning this agreement, which established the basis for the respect of sovereignty and friendly relations between the two countries.

One Common Trench or Two Opposite Ones?

Chapter 4

By Saddam Hussein

The Kurdish Question

What is our opinion of the Kurdish national question? We will not remain silent when confronted with harmful trends. We do not share the attitude of the Communist Party member who tolerates harmful aspects of a nationalist movement although they contradict his own ideas and doctrines. If the Communist Party had been the leader of the Revolution, it certainly would regard some of the concepts, which it is now tolerating as deviations, and dangers, which should be eliminated. The experiences of the socialist countries are proof of this.

We are, therefore, led to believe that many of the ideas expressed now by the Communist Party are merely means for making gains at the expense of the ABSP and do not constitute a principled stand. On the other hand, when a Ba'athist makes a mistake and violates his leadership's instructions, his error also amounts to a deviation.

We must understand that this country will remain within its present geographical boundaries forever. Any changes in its political image should be linked to the struggle for Pan-Arab unity and objectives. We must understand that the national question should be approached with a conception of autonomy established by reasonable thinking based on

faith in the people and not as a result of the abnormal conditions, which we have undergone.

At a meeting of the Legislative Council of the Autonomous Area I made the following statement:

“When does it become both materially and spiritually impossible to secede? Materially, it becomes impossible through prevention of secession, and spiritually, by mental and spiritual rejection of secession by the overwhelming majority of the Kurdish people and by all Iraqis. Only then would it be impossible to infringe upon the unity of our people and territory. If their balance were upset and one of these two factors prevailed at the expense of the other, our progress would be considerably compromised. Consequently, if any of us imagines that material impossibility alone would be sufficient for ensuring the unity of the destiny of the Iraqi people, he would surely be wrong. This is not the only basis of our work and policies.

“On the other hand, if we view the question impracticably, unobjectively and apolitically, imagining that we could find a solution through a casual mental exercise, we would be inviting the imperialists to undermine the unity of our people. It is with such a balanced outlook that we should strengthen and develop the Autonomous institutions, to enhance their activity in the political, social and economic processes, which aim at building a new Iraq in the spirit of the great July Revolution, under the leadership of your party, the ABSP.

“There is no room for one-sided conceptions based exclusively on the use of force for foiling the imperialist designs and schemes. Nor can we tolerate utopian views which underestimate the importance of force in the process of development and in the protection of the sovereignty and the national and territorial unity of Iraq, for all time.”

The antagonistic forces, including those supporting secession, should find it both spiritually and materially impossible to achieve their aims... spiritually, in the sense that our people in Kurdistan believe that their destiny is ultimately linked to the territorial integrity of this, associating all their aims and aspirations with it.

The material side of this question is a function of the legal, political, economic and even military measures taken by the State. In principle there should be a balance between these two elements. Either of these two factors alone cannot prevent antagonistic activities in the Kurdistan Autonomous Area. Moreover, anyone who imagines that dealing with abstract principles alone is sufficient will not promote Iraq's unity, but only lead our people to incorrect conclusions.

On the other hand, any concept proceeding exclusively from the efficiency of political, military, economic and similar measures would also be a deviation.

Antagonistic activity should be ruled out as a matter of principle, by measures stemming from principles. Such an orientation will inspire our people in the Autonomous Area to

believe that the leadership in Baghdad is but a part of themselves, striving for their own benefit and working for the national cause, in the same way that they are doing. In addition to that, certain other prerequisites should be satisfied: controlling the borders, moving inhabitants twenty kilometers from the borders to prevent infiltration, creating networks for gathering information and keeping watch on harmful trends, deploying an army in the area, building roads in the mountains, etc.

Another important point is the necessity for providing a means of self-examination. Let us suppose that each of you were to change his position. The Ba'athist, for instance, would place himself in a Communist's shoes, or vice-versa. How would each of you act in the face of any social, political, economic or national conditions experienced by Iraq either now or in the future? If we did this, we would certainly minimize our criticism of each other. Also, the results and formulas of cooperation would be more positive.

One Common Trench or Two Opposite Ones?

Part 5

By Saddam Hussein

Where lies our greatest victory?

In the discussions of the Higher Committee for Northern Affairs attended by some leading comrades, during which a review of the combat operations took place, we asked: "Where lies our greatest victory up to the present?" Some said that the greatest victory was the crossing of the Ali Beig Pass¹ in keeping with the well-known plan. But we disagreed. The greatest victory was that, up to the present, no soldier had fired at any individual from the opposite trench when the latter had exhausted his ammunition and raised his rifle in capitulation. The greatest victory was that not one woman had been raped during the fighting. There was no repetition of the past plunders. Despite the bloodshed, the surrendering soldiers were invited to eat from the same dish as the victors, as if nothing had happened.

This is the real victory. The unity of Iraq is still strong in the hearts of the Kurds fighting in the opposite trenches, as well as in the hearts of the Kurds and Arabs fighting in the armed forces. So long as the mentality and psychology of unity prevail, this is the greatest victory. Saying this, I know that nothing has happened which contradicts my statement, with the exception of two incidents, neither, of which was the fault of the

armed forces. The first took place in Zakho² the other in Belinkian Basin³. At the time we took those responsible severely to task and established strict rules as well as a detailed report endorsed by the leadership outlining a full explanation of our activities. I will tell you quite frankly that I did not imagine that these ethical and principled rules would be implemented as they were during the fight. I personally allowed for some differences between the report contents and their actual implementation, but, in effect, the report was fully implemented with respect to its principles and ethical grounds.

After March 6, 1975, however, some of our forces grew self-righteous and acted in violation of their orders. We had always told them not to act like victors, since we had not won a military battle with a foreign country.

All our people had triumphed, even those who had fought in the opposite trench. This is the spirit with which we should approach our people. But was this spirit actually put into effect, in keeping with the orders issued after March 1975? The answer is no. Some people became over-confident and were guilty of errors and excesses. In the context of this major achievement, for the sake of history we must ask ourselves: From a scientific point of view, taking into consideration all the prevailing circumstances, are the errors which took place natural ones? There was fighting and heavy casualties. The whole Revolution was endangered by the possibility of an enemy victory. The historical potential of the ABSP was given a major test. In the context of all these circumstances, the excesses, which took place, were not entirely exceptional. We do not want to justify them, of course. We have already criticised them severely, and continue to do so since 1975. We have issued guidelines and punished the offenders. In order to speak objectively, one must remember the past 14 years of fighting and the 14 thousand dead and injured among the armed forces and patriotic detachments within one year, in addition to the heavy casualties suffered by our people as well. Although I have no statistics on the latter, I repeat: In view of the political context, the major embarrassment and danger, which we feared, was a reaction against the March and against Autonomy itself. People would say to each other: "In the case of victory, we should not react passively but continue to approach this question as we did in the past. We should not assume that the manifesto was signed with Mullah, and since he abandoned it we should do the same." No, this is not just a commitment of the Mullah; it is our own commitment, the commitment of the leadership, the patriotic forces, and the ABSP. Mullah Mustapha was only a circumstantial actor in the question of signing the Match Manifesto document, whose essence is autonomy. He never actually believed in autonomy. The Kurdish brothers are well aware of this. Nor did he believe in the state, authority, secession, or unity, but rather in an abnormal situation through which he could consolidate his political position. The only element of leadership he ever possessed was a rifle. Hence, the only thing he wished for was a rifle.

This is the first time I have said this. Not even at the leadership meetings have I said that, given these circumstances, the errors, which occurred, seem natural to me. Since we in the leadership are very sensitive to errors, the members of the leadership, present in this hall, are aware that I am saying this for the first time. We sharply reprimand the advanced cadres, taking them to task for the smallest error. But since we wish to evaluate the recent

past of this question—in order to set things straight rather than just to punish the guilty—we see this as a routine procedure.

We are not allowing such errors to recur, but rather placing them within the scope of a general objective historical evaluation.

1 - Au Beig Pass is considered to be one of the most strategic natural barriers, not only in Iraq, but also in the entire world. This pass has witnessed many fierce battles. The liberation of the pass by the Iraqi army led to the defeat of the renegade faction.

2 - Zakho is located in Dohuk Governorate, near the Iraqi-Turkish border.

3 - Belinkian Basin was a center of the renegade faction, which witnessed fierce fighting.